

THE STORY OF RAPID TRANSIT

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The story of rapid transit by Beckles Willson

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BECKLES WILLSON

THE STORY OF RAPID TRANSIT

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BY
BECKLES WILLSON

WITH THIRTY-SEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK
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PREFACE

It has been said that "when the nineteenth century takes its place with the other centuries in the chronological charts of the future, it will, if it need a symbol, almost inevitably have as that symbol, a steam-engine running upon a railway."*

The characteristic material problem of the nineteenth century was Rapid Transit, and it promises to be one of the most prominent sciences of the twentieth. To it is consecrated to-day more capital, labor, and ingenuity than to all the other sciences together. It is an end to which the greatest inventors and most skilful engineers have consecrated their talents. Whether it be in the form of the railway—steam or electric—the steamship, the telegraph, with or without wires, the telephone, the automobile, ever great and still greater velocity of locomotion or communication is the goal in view. And what victories have been won over the sluggish forces of nature!—what obstacles overcome! The whole story is so modern that, like Electricity and Photography, we can trace its beginnings not further back than the time of our grandsires.

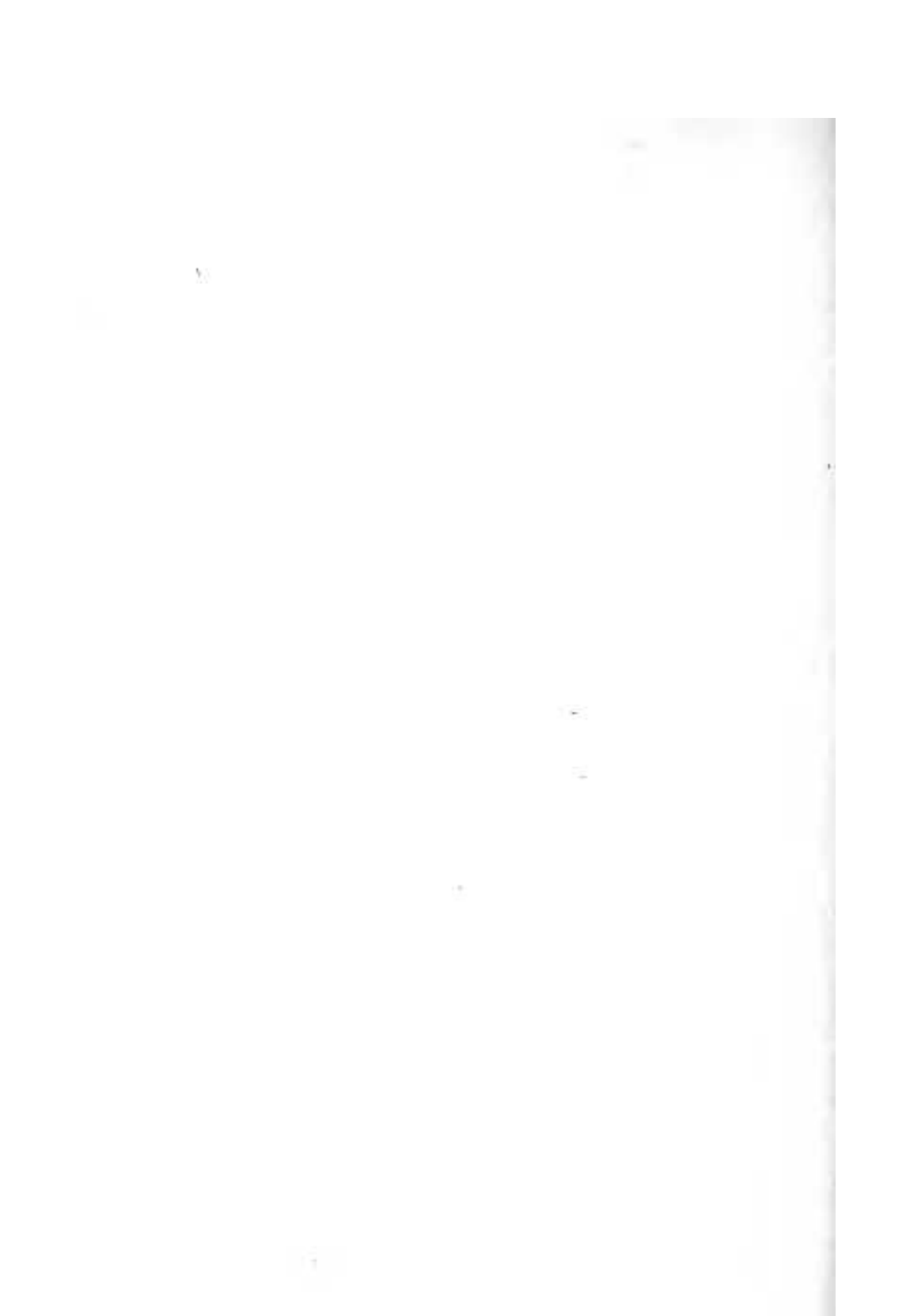
In this story of the rise and progress of the

* H. G. Wells: "Anticipations."

science of Rapid Transit, with its ever new devices, its monuments of engineering, and its billions of capital, there is perceptible a kind of magic. The acceleration from decade to decade since the era of the mail-coaches may here be plainly noted; and the reader will doubtless find the comparison of the actual contemporary timetables of the journeys between London and Edinburgh, Paris and New York, with those of to-day, a source of interest and information.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. BEGINNINGS OF RAPID TRANSIT—THE MAIL-COACH	11
II. THE FIRST RAILWAYS	25
III. STEAM NAVIGATION	44
IV. DEVELOPMENT OF THE RAILWAY	64
V. THE TELEGRAPH—WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY	96
VI. AERIAL NAVIGATION—HOMING PIGEONS	114
VII. OCEAN TELEGRAPHY—THE TELEPHONE—PNEUMATIC TUBES—POSTAL SYSTEMS	136
VIII. THE BICYCLE—MOTOR CYCLES	148
IX. MOTOR CARRIAGES	161
X. STREET RAILWAYS	182



LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
A Modern Motor Car	<i>Frontispiece</i>
The Earliest Hackney Coach	16
The Cabriolet	20
An Early Stage-coach	23
Old English Coach—"The Flying Coach"	27
Globular-shaped Mail-coach, Used in Continental Europe a Century Ago	29
One of Stephenson's Passenger Engines	35
The <i>Experiment</i> , the First Railway Passenger Coach, 1825	37
The <i>Rocket</i>	39
The <i>Royal George</i>	40
Liverpool and Manchester Railway—First Class, 1830	42
Liverpool and Manchester Railway—Second and Third Class, 1831	42
Steam <i>versus</i> Horses	45
The <i>Comet</i>	48
The <i>Great Western</i>	51
The <i>Deutschland</i>	63
Facsimile Time-table, 1839	67
A Diligence	69
The Royal Train in 1843, London and Birmingham	72
Great Western Railway—The <i>Flying Dutchman</i>	77
Interior of a Third-class Dining-car, Midland Railway	81
The First Electric Railway	93
Earliest Advertisement of the Electric Telegraph	105
An Airship Designed by Francis Lana, of Barcelona, 1670	115
The First Aerial Voyage	117
Santos-Dumont Rounding the Eiffel Tower in His Airship	134
The "Dandy-horse"	149
James's Steam-carriage	165
Steam Road Coach, 1833	166